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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 22 June to 6 November 2017

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my report of 11 July 2017 (S/2017/591), including on specific provisions of Council resolution 2373 (2017). During the reporting period, the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally calm. However, there was no progress with regard to the outstanding obligations of the parties under resolution 1701 (2006) or towards a permanent ceasefire.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

2. Israeli and Lebanese authorities continued to reaffirm their commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and the cessation of hostilities. Despite the relative calm along the Blue Line, the level of tensions between Lebanon and Israel remained high, with rhetoric on both sides that resulted in increased anxiety, including among the local population. The United Nations continued to urge both parties to refrain from potentially inflammatory comments and to utilize established liaison channels to address concerns.

3. On two occasions, tensions rose across the Blue Line and required UNIFIL intervention and liaison with the two sides to avert escalation. On 9 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL of the presence of suspicious equipment near Kfar Shuba (Sector East), in the Shab'a Farms area. When UNIFIL arrived at the location, the device, a fragmentation explosive, had been partially dismantled and moved. The UNIFIL investigation found that the Lebanese Armed Forces had violated the Blue Line when removing the device from south of the Blue Line. The incident led the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, to warn during a speech delivered on the occasion of Ashura that such actions, which he attributed to Israel, were not acceptable and to voice Hizbullah's determination to look for ways to address the issue if it was not resolved by political means.

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4. On 19 September, the Israel Defense Forces alerted UNIFIL that a Lebanese soldier had thrown stones at the Israeli technical fence close to one of their positions south-west of Ayta al-Sha'b (Sector West). The soldier had taken up an armed alert position in anticipation of a reaction by the Israel Defense Forces. UNIFIL quickly intervened to prevent escalation. The Lebanese Armed Forces redeployed and disciplined the soldier.

5. During a visit to UNIFIL headquarters on 11 September, the Minister of Defence of Lebanon, Yacoub Riad Sarraf, voiced his Government's support for UNIFIL in the implementation of its mandate and commitment to close cooperation and coordination between the Mission and the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Minister also informed UNIFIL that the Fifth Intervention Regiment of the Lebanese Armed Forces would deploy to southern Lebanon imminently. During the visit of the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Joseph Aoun, to UNIFIL on 22 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces formally announced the deployment of the Regiment, in line with assurances by the Lebanese authorities that the Lebanese Armed Forces would increase its presence in the south as soon as security conditions along the eastern border allowed. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander and the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces also agreed to establish a coordination committee to explore ways to further enhance the implementation of mandated tasks. A more visible Lebanese Armed Forces presence, coordinated with UNIFIL, south of the Litani River, particularly along potential areas of tension near the Blue Line, will contribute to mitigating the risk of serious incidents.

6. From 1 July to 30 October, UNIFIL recorded 420 ground violations of the Blue Line, similar to levels observed during the same period in 2016.

7. More than 90 per cent of the observed ground violations were committed by shepherds with their flocks or farmers cultivating their fields; the majority near the Shab'a Farms and Bastrah (Sector East) and Rumaysh (Sector West). Nine per cent of violations involved crossings to access the Shoeib well (Sector East) near Blida.

8. UNIFIL completed its investigations into the firing incident across the Blue Line in the Kfar Kila area (Sector East) on 26 October 2016 (see S/2017/201, para. 12), the crossing by a Lebanese man into Israel near Kfar Kila on 27 April 2017 (see S/2017/591, para. 10), and the suspicious device found in the area of Kfar Shuba on 9 September. In the conclusions and recommendations of the investigations, the need for close and timely liaison and cooperation by the parties with UNIFIL was emphasized.

9. Israel continued to violate Lebanese airspace on a daily basis, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty. From 1 July to 30 October, UNIFIL recorded 758 air violations, totalling 3,188 overflight hours, an increase of 80 per cent compared with the same period in 2016. Unmanned aerial vehicles were involved in over 93 per cent (707) of those violations; the remainder involved fighter or unidentified aircraft.

10. UNIFIL protested all air violations to the Israel Defense Forces and urged their immediate cessation. The Government of Lebanon also protested the airspace violations to UNIFIL. Such violations of Lebanese sovereignty undermine the cessation of hostilities and efforts to reach a permanent ceasefire.

11. The Israeli occupation of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line continued, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty. To date, Israel has not responded to the proposal that UNIFIL submitted to both parties in 2011 aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel

Defense Forces from the occupied area. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL in July 2011 of the agreement of Lebanon to the proposal.

12. Lebanon also protested alleged violations of its sovereignty by Israeli vessels operating near the Israeli line of buoys. The delineation of the maritime boundary between the two countries is still disputed; Lebanon considers that the line of buoys, installed unilaterally by Israel, runs through its territorial waters and does not recognize it. The United Nations also does not recognize the line of buoys. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, which is mandated to assist the Government of Lebanon in securing its borders and other entry points, maintained a visible presence in the southern part of the area of maritime operations to prevent tensions between Israel and Lebanon.

13. Lebanon also asserted that Israel continued to violate its sovereignty by conducting electronic surveillance, both across the Blue Line and through devices placed on Lebanese territory.

14. In accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), UNIFIL continued to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in establishing an area between the Blue Line and the Litani River free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL. The Force stands ready to act within the full scope of its mandate and capabilities should there be credible evidence or information supporting the presence of unauthorized weapons or the imminent threat of hostile activity emanating from the area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces regularly reiterated its strong commitment to act immediately upon receipt of evidence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons in the area in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006).

15. UNIFIL observed 251 instances of individuals carrying unauthorized arms in the area of operations, comparable to the number in the same period in 2016. The majority (240) involved civilians carrying hunting weapons near the Blue Line in the areas of Mays al-Jabal, Blida and Bastrah (Sector East). On 25 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces reissued a public statement prohibiting hunting and the presence of weapons south of the Litani River. An association of local hunters, supported by local politicians, protested the ban, disputing its legality under resolution 1701 (2006).

16. The remaining incidents involved other weapons, mostly assault rifles, observed in the area of operations (see annex I). In each instance, UNIFIL alerted the Lebanese Armed Forces and requested that they take appropriate measures to prevent the presence of unauthorized weapons. The Lebanese Armed Forces continues to follow up on such incidents to prevent their recurrence.

17. In addition, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNIFIL about the alleged presence of Hizbullah weapons and infrastructure in three specified locations in the UNIFIL area of operations. On 9 August, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in a letter addressed to me, referred to the same "three Hizbullah installments" and requested an update on follow-up actions by UNIFIL. The locations include an area on the northern boundary of the UNIFIL area of operations, a privately-owned house and an open compound in a village. UNIFIL shared the information with the Lebanese Armed Forces command. Within the parameters of its mandate, UNIFIL closely monitored the three locations, including through air reconnaissance, satellite imagery and patrols. UNIFIL shared the information with the Lebanese Armed Forces command and cross-checked its findings with the Lebanese Armed Forces. Subsequently, the findings were shared with the Israel Defense Forces. No evidence to confirm the allegations was established. UNIFIL continues to regularly monitor those areas.

18. On 24 August, UNIFIL discovered an abandoned underground structure near the Blue Line in the vicinity of Yarun (Sector West). The structure was not in an operationally viable condition. An excavation of the site by UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces confirmed no evidence of weapons at the scene. The Lebanese Armed Forces determined that it had been long disused, and destroyed the structure.

19. Through tripartite forum discussions and bilateral engagement with UNIFIL, Israel raised the issue of "suspicious" individuals in civilian attire, alleged to be Hizbullah operatives, conducting "reconnaissance" of areas south of the Blue Line. UNIFIL observed and closely monitored individuals taking photographs of areas south of the Blue Line and the work of an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO), "Green without Borders", operating in the area. On 20 June, the Permanent Representative of Israel referred to that organization as conducting illicit activities and violations on behalf of Hizbullah (see S/2017/526). UNIFIL verified the credentials of the NGO with the Lebanese authorities and received official confirmation of the organization's proper accreditation and environmental purpose. On 29 August, UNIFIL observed that members of the NGO had tampered with barbed wire near a Blue Line marker and referred the issue to the Lebanese authorities to prevent such incidents from reoccurring. In the conduct of its operations, UNIFIL observed no unauthorized weapons or other violations in relation to the organization, including with reference to the above-mentioned incident. UNIFIL continues to monitor concerned areas regularly.

20. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL was generally respected, except on eight occasions (see annex II). In each case, UNIFIL responded within its mandate, in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces and local authorities, and subsequently ensured its freedom of movement in the incident locations.

21. In a number of villages, for instance, Ayta al-Sha'b (Sector West), narrow roadways and community sensitivities necessitated that patrols be conducted on foot. In other instances, for example in Blida, community leaders have requested that patrols conducted with heavy armoured vehicles pass through main roads only, owing to road safety concerns. In some areas, the potential presence of unexploded ordnance poses a security risk. Private property or difficult and rugged terrain also limit access by UNIFIL patrols. Where the conduct of patrols in heavy vehicles is not feasible, officers from the liaison branch and unarmed military observers from Observer Group Lebanon or the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, as well as UNIFIL personnel on light vehicle and foot patrols, are deployed to achieve unimpeded access throughout the area of operations. In addition, such areas are monitored by regular helicopter patrols. UNIFIL maintains close contact with the leadership of local communities and the Lebanese Armed Forces to enhance situational awareness and address any local sensitivities without compromising its mandated tasks. UNIFIL has no access to the northern part of the village of Ghajar and the adjacent area, which remain occupied by the Israel Defense Forces.

22. Pursuant to paragraph 15 of resolution 2373 (2017), UNIFIL increased its visible presence and activities, with a focus on preserving the cessation of hostilities. UNIFIL closely monitored the situation from fixed positions along the Blue Line and maintained a high operational tempo; more than 22,686 mobile vehicular and foot patrols were completed from 1 July to 26 October across the area of operations. UNIFIL adjusted its operational priorities, increasing the percentage of patrols, including by foot and during night-time, conducted along the Blue Line, from 27.5 per cent in July to 33.5 per cent in October. UNIFIL also conducted over 141 hours of helicopter patrols from July to October, including over rugged and difficult terrain. Those operational adjustments contributed to improved Mission visibility, in particular close to the Blue Line and in sensitive areas.

23. The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL regularly review their modus operandi to further improve their close coordination. UNIFIL conducts 19 per cent of its operations with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Lebanese Armed Forces also increased their participation in patrols along the Blue Line.

24. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force carried out maritime interdiction operations on a 24-hour basis and capacity-building for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy. During the reporting period, the Maritime Task Force hailed 2,908 vessels, of which 708 were inspected and cleared by the Lebanese authorities.

25. Relations between UNIFIL and the local population remained largely positive; UNIFIL continued its outreach and engagement with local communities. The Mission continued to identify and implement quick-impact projects to address pressing needs of local communities, support the extension of State authority and contribute to acceptance of the Force. In addition to the UNIFIL-funded quick-impact projects, individual contingents carried out 30 projects focused on electricity, education, water, the environment, social assistance, the local economy and health.

26. The Mission continued to engage with a range of stakeholders to build the capacity of State institutions, such as the civil-military cooperation capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces, civil defence volunteers, the Internal Security Forces and the municipal police, including in the implementation of the Mission's strategy for the protection of civilians.

27. In line with the priorities identified by the Lebanese Armed Forces during the strategic review of UNIFIL (see S/2017/202), UNIFIL is working closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces to establish a Lebanese Armed Forces civil-military cooperation centre in Marj'yun (Sector East).

B. Security and liaison arrangements

28. UNIFIL chaired two tripartite meetings, on 31 July and 19 September. While acknowledging a sustained period of stability along the Blue Line, the Israel Defense Forces expressed concern about the aforementioned suspicious Hizbullah activity, involving individuals in civilian clothes taking photographs along the Blue Line and the activities of "Green without Borders." The Lebanese Armed Forces protested the continued Israeli air violations and the occupation of northern Ghajar by Israel. During both meetings, the parties underscored their continued commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including respect for the Blue Line, and to maintain stability, as well as voicing their willingness to explore paths towards a permanent ceasefire.

29. UNIFIL and the parties made extensive use of other established liaison and coordination arrangements to exchange information and facilitate conflict prevention. The liaison and coordination provided by UNIFIL enabled the quick de-escalation of tensions across the Blue Line. UNIFIL continued to explore with the parties ways to further enhance the effectiveness of liaison and coordination. The establishment of a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv, Israel, was discussed with the Israeli authorities. The agreement of Israel to the UNIFIL proposal remains pending.

30. UNIFIL continued its efforts to advance progress in the visible marking of the Blue Line. With the majority of points agreed upon by the parties having been marked, UNIFIL continued to encourage progress in marking the remaining points. Now in its tenth year, the Blue Line marking process remains an important confidence-building activity with significant strategic value.

31. As mentioned above, the Lebanese Armed Forces reinforced its presence in the South Litani Sector with the deployment of the Fifth Intervention Regiment. The 950–1,000-strong unit joined the two brigades already operating south of the Litani River. It is deployed centrally in an area straddling Sectors East and West of the UNIFIL area of operations. With the Regiment's arrival, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces are in the process of adjusting their operational coordination to incorporate the strengthened Lebanese Armed Forces presence.

32. UNIFIL continues to work closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy in maritime interdiction operations inside Lebanese territorial waters in an effort to build up Lebanese Armed Forces Navy capabilities. The Lebanese Armed Forces Navy has limited capacity to deploy units in Lebanese territorial waters. Small units with limited crew capabilities able to operate in calm weather can be deployed for up to 24 hours. The Lebanese Armed Forces Navy maintains a current maritime picture of its waters through the coastal radar system. To ensure that at least one Lebanese vessel is at sea operating together with the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force at all times, the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy requires at least three vessels and trained crews, which are not currently available. As highlighted in the 2017 strategic review of UNIFIL and concomitant with the planned reduction of the Maritime Task Force from seven ships to six in January 2018, the Lebanese authorities are seeking to acquire a suitable offshore patrol vessel.

33. UNIFIL conducted 194 training activities on maritime operational issues, contributing to improved common operational standards between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

34. The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL continued to engage in the strategic dialogue process, which seeks to support the development of the capabilities and presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon and Lebanese territorial waters and constitutes an integral part of the capabilities development plan for the Lebanese Armed Forces. In cooperation with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, UNIFIL continued efforts to promote international assistance with donor countries in support of the Lebanese Armed Forces deployment in the UNIFIL area of operations, including at the eleventh coordination meeting of the Executive Military Commission, held on 29 June.

35. In line with the recommendations of the strategic review of UNIFIL and through the strategic dialogue, UNIFIL intensified consultations with the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces on the elaboration of a "model Lebanese Armed Forces regiment". On 22 September, during his visit to UNIFIL headquarters, the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces expressed his full commitment to establishing the model regiment, which will cooperate closely with UNIFIL, in particular along the Blue Line. This model regiment is distinct from the aforementioned Fifth Intervention Regiment.

36. Building on the identified priorities and recommendations of the strategic review of UNIFIL and with a view to implementing resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2373 (2017), UNIFIL, in close coordination with the Special Coordinator for Lebanon, enhanced its engagement with the Lebanese authorities towards the extension of State authority and presence and building the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon and Lebanese territorial waters, including through the International Support Group for Lebanon. In that regard, consultations continued with Member States and the Government of Lebanon to galvanize international support for Lebanese security institutions, especially in relation to priority land and maritime capabilities.

37. In line with its strategic priority to ensure that it is prepared to deliver on its mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, UNIFIL

completed contingency planning at the tactical level and commenced targeted training on the protection of civilians for all Mission personnel. UNIFIL focused on a range of preventive actions to maintain calm along the Blue Line and in the area of operations. An update on the implementation of the recommendations of the strategic review is provided in annex III.

C. Disarming armed groups

38. The maintenance of arms outside the control of the State by Hizbullah and other groups continues to restrict the ability of the Government of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. Hizbullah demonstrated its possession of weapons and military equipment through military operations, including its battle against militants from Jabhat Fath al-Sham on the outskirts of Arsal between 21 and 27 July, during which 28 Hizbullah fighters and approximately 150 militants were killed, as well as in statements.

39. Illustrating the heightened rhetoric during the reporting period, in a speech on 23 June, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, stated that "the door would open for tens of thousands of mujahidin from the Arab and Muslim worlds to be partners in this battle", should Israel attack Lebanon. On 13 July, the Head of the Executive Council of Hizbullah, Sayyed Hashem Safieddine, reportedly stated that "Hizbullah has significant ability to show many new capabilities" in the context of a potential future confrontation with Israel. On 13 August, Mr. Nasrallah expressed a veiled threat against the Israeli nuclear reactor at Dimona. On 1 October, Mr. Nasrallah threatened that there would be "not a safe place in occupied Palestine" in the event of Israeli aggression.

40. On 23 September, in an interview with the French media, the President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, reportedly stated that "one cannot deprive Hizbullah of its weapons as long as Israel does not respect the resolutions of the UN Security Council", and that Hizbullah's weapons "serve to ensure our resistance to the State of Israel".

41. The media reported statements by Israeli officials pertaining to the use of force against targets in Lebanon, the relationship between Lebanon, the Lebanese Armed Forces and Hizbullah, and alleged Iranian weapons facilities in Lebanon. On 28 August, the Minister of Defence of Israel, Avigdor Lieberman, reportedly said that "Israel will act with great force during a confrontation" in which Israeli citizens were attacked. On 24 September, the media quoted the Minister of Education and of Diaspora Affairs, Naftali Bennett, as having stated that Israel would "use full force on the Lebanese Government and infrastructure" if attacked. Mr. Bennett also made statements equating Lebanon with Hizbullah. On 10 October, Mr. Lieberman reportedly alleged that "the Lebanese army has turned into an integral part of Hizbullah's command structure".

42. Mutual accusations of violations of resolution 1701 (2006) continued. In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 9 August 2017 (A/71/1031-S/2017/705), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations rejected allegations made by the Permanent Representative of Israel in his letter of 20 June 2017 (S/2017/526) with respect to the environmental NGO "Green without borders", noting that the association was licensed by the Lebanese State and was not in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). In a letter dated 31 August, the Permanent Representative of Israel alleged "continued involvement with Hezbollah" by a major in the Lebanese Armed Forces, which the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations refuted in a letter dated 9 October 2017. In letters addressed to the President

of the Security Council dated 8 September and 30 October 2017 (S/2017/772 and A/72/553-S/2017/915), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon denounced Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace on 7 September "to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic". In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 11 September 2017 (A/72/499-S/2017/773), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon denounced an Israeli overflight on 10 September over the city of Sidon, in which Israeli aircraft flew at low altitude and broke the sound barrier. The Israel Defense Forces characterized a flight of their aircraft in Lebanese airspace on 16 October as "routine".

43. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security forces intensified arrests of individuals suspected of affiliation with extremist groups or of involvement in terrorist activities throughout Lebanon. From July to the end of October, 226 terrorism-related arrests were reported, including of suspected affiliates of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Jabhat Fath al-Sham. Several weapons caches were also uncovered.

44. There was no progress in dismantling the military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada, which continue to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor and effectively control parts of the border.

45. While the security situation in the majority of Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon remained generally stable, violence in the Ein El Helweh camp between extremist groups and the joint Palestinian security forces remains of serious concern. Between 17 and 23 August, 8 people were killed and 86 injured and around 400 families were displaced following intense clashes. Heavy weapons were reportedly used, including mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. Extensive damage to infrastructure, particularly shelters, created a precarious humanitarian situation. Basic service delivery in the camp by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had to be suspended temporarily. The Special Coordinator for Lebanon stressed the need to work collectively for the stability of the camp during her meeting with the camp's political factions in Ein El Helweh on 25 July.

46. Intermittent incidents of violence, often linked to criminal activity, occurred in other camps, including Beddawi, Burj Barajneh and Shatila. In the Nahr el-Bared camp, in northern Lebanon, there have been recurrent protests since mid-August in which UNRWA has been called upon to resume rental subsidies discontinued owing to a lack of funding in October 2015 for the families displaced by the 2007 clashes.

D. Arms embargo and border control

47. Allegations of arms transfers to Hizbullah continued on a regular basis. The United Nations takes such allegations seriously, but is not in a position to substantiate them independently.

48. During my visit to Israel, on 28 July, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, raised the issue of alleged "intentions to build factories for the production of precision-guided missiles in Syria and Lebanon" of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Prime Minister accused the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hizbullah of "breaking international law by using civilians as human shields and shooting at civilians".

49. On 30 June, the Lebanese Armed Forces raided informal Syrian refugee settlements at Arsal. During the operation, five suicide bombings and a hand grenade explosion lightly injured seven Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers. One

Syrian child was reportedly killed. Of the 356 individuals arrested for interrogation during the operation, 4 died while in the custody of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In line with the obligations of Lebanon under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Saad Hariri, ordered an investigation on 5 July. On 24 July, the Military Prosecutor concluded that the detainees had died of "natural causes" and that there was "no evidence of violence". Pictures of corpses attributed to the four Syrians circulating on social media showed extensive gashes and bruising. Neither the report nor the details of the investigation have been made public.

50. In the context of the military operations against militants along the north-eastern border, incidents of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon temporarily spiked. After protecting the town of Arsal from militant infiltration, the Lebanese Armed Forces launched a military operation against ISIL militants on the outskirts of Ra's Baalbeck and Qa' on 19 August. At the same time, the Syrian Arab Armed Forces and Hizbullah attacked ISIL militants on the Syrian side of the border. The operation ended with a ceasefire announced by the Lebanese Armed Forces on 28 August. The remains of nine Lebanese soldiers abducted in August 2014 were recovered by the Lebanese Armed Forces between 27 and 29 August. Following the departure of the militants, the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic. Lebanese security agencies assess that consequently the security situation along the border has improved.

51. Agreements between non-State armed groups resulted in the departure of Syrian fighters and their families from border areas in Lebanon to the Syrian Arab Republic, totalling between 6,000 and 7,000 persons according to media reports. On 2 August, fighters affiliated with Jabhat Fath al-Sham and their families reportedly left for Idlib, Syrian Arab Republic. Following the surrender without fighting of Saraya Ahl al-Sham on 22 July, hundreds of fighters and their families reportedly departed on 14 August. Moreover, hundreds of ISIL-affiliated fighters and their families reportedly departed on 28 August towards Dayr al-Zawr, Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations was not involved in the returns and could not confirm the intentions or the numbers of those who left for the Syrian Arab Republic. Two movements of people affiliated with Saraya Ahl al-Sham totalling 235 persons in June and July 2017 were partially monitored by the United Nations.

52. Hizbullah remained engaged in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic. It was reported in the media that a number of Lebanese nationals also continued to fight with non-State armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic.

53. On 25 September, the Prime Minister of Lebanon launched an initiative to limit the risk posed by the hazardous use of firearms, including for commemorative or celebratory shooting.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

54. Areas on the outskirts of Arsal are contaminated with landmines following the militant presence. Seven Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers were killed by mines during the military operation in August, and one civilian was reported to have been killed and another to have been wounded on 28 September. Mine clearance continues as part of the plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces to fully redeploy to the area.

55. Six UNIFIL mine clearance teams cleared 779.3 m2 of land in the UNIFIL area of operations. The Mine Action Service of the United Nations conducted 22 quality assurance visits and 25 training and safety monitoring visits to UNIFIL

demining teams. Safety training and awareness briefings with respect to landmines and other explosive remnants of war were provided to 61 United Nations civilian and military personnel. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre, in coordination with UNIFIL, held two mine risk education events that benefited over 400 children.

56. Two incidents involving landmines and unexploded ordnance were recorded in the UNIFIL area of operations: on 2 July, in Ramiyah (Sector West), the explosion of a cluster munition killed a farmer; on 6 September, a cluster bomb explosion injured the employee of an NGO clearing munitions near Tayr Harfa (Sector West).

F. Delineation of borders

57. No progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, including in uncertain or disputed areas, such as the outskirts of Arsal, that recently witnessed fighting. There was no progress in addressing the matter of the Shab'a Farms. The Syrian Arab Republic and Israel have yet to respond to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area proposed in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641).

G. Political and institutional stability

58. On 4 November, in Riyadh, the Prime Minister of Lebanon announced his resignation. The President of Lebanon subsequently issued a statement that he would await the return of the Prime Minister to Lebanon to determine next steps, while underlining the importance of national unity. On 5 November, I issued a statement to express my concern about this development, urge all sides to support the stability of Lebanon and the continuity of State institutions, and reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

59. Preparations for parliamentary elections scheduled for May 2018 continue. In line with the electoral calendar, the supervisory commission for elections was formed on 14 September and its budget was approved on 6 October. Parliamentary approval is pending for the decision by the Cabinet of 17 September to introduce a biometric card system, "voter megacentres" to allow voters to vote in their area of residence rather than registration, and out-of-country voting. On 2 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched online voter registration for the Lebanese diaspora. On 12 October, the Cabinet approved an electoral budget of $46.5 million. With regard to municipal elections, a bill was passed on 19 September that could boost married women's participation by allowing them to run in their own, not only their spouses', districts of origin.

60. On 20 October, Parliament passed the State budget for 2017. Other Cabinet and parliamentary decisions included raising the salary scale for civil servants, in conjunction with increased taxes. Tax legislation pertaining to petroleum-related activities was also passed.

61. The Higher Defence Council met regularly, including on 8 August to endorse the Lebanese Armed Forces operation against ISIL militants on the outskirts of Ra's Baalbeck and Qa', and on 8 September to endorse the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces on the eastern border. Both the Prime Minister and the President have underlined the need for continued vigilance with regard to the terrorist threat.

62. The Government of Lebanon, with the support of the United Nations, continues efforts to develop a national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism, in line with the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, presented in 2016. Following extensive interministerial dialogue, the strategy is being drafted, in parallel with preparations for inclusive consultations with national stakeholders.

63. On 19 September, as recommended by the Committee against Torture, established under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Lebanon adopted a new law criminalizing torture. Some civil society actors criticized the law for not fully meeting international standards. In the fight against gender-based violence, on 16 August the Parliament abolished article 522 of the Criminal Code, which allowed rapists to be discharged from prosecution if they married their victims.

64. Lebanon continued to be affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic; as at 30 June 2017, 1,001,051 Syrian refugees were registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The economic vulnerability of Syrian refugees in Lebanon continued to rise. Preliminary results of a socioeconomic survey conducted by UNHCR, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund in 2017 show that 58 per cent of the refugees live in extreme poverty (an increase of more than 5 per cent from 2016) and 74 per cent live below the poverty line. As at 3 October, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan was only 33 per cent funded (compared with 43 per cent at the same point in 2016). The current underfunding puts critical programmes in the health, education and water and sanitation sectors at risk.

65. Despite over $5.8 billion in donor contributions since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, most Lebanese feel that vulnerable Lebanese have been neglected by the international assistance. The United Nations inter-agency stability monitoring survey, however, shows that international assistance has reduced tensions in municipalities benefiting from direct assistance.

66. Anti-Syrian refugee sentiment is on the rise in the media and in the political discourse. In 2014, 40 per cent of respondents to a survey among refugees and host communities reported no tension between these communities; in 2017, only 2 per cent reported no tension. A marked increase in protests over Syrian labour competition was reported across Lebanon, leading to a wave of shop closures and municipal curfews. The United Nations and different Lebanese ministries have been working on messages to reduce tensions between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.

67. In a letter addressed to me dated 16 October, the President of Lebanon warned of the "existential challenge" that Syrian refugees posed for Lebanon and called upon the United Nations and the international community to "exert all possible efforts and provide the appropriate conditions for the safe return" of Syrian refugees, and requested that such return not be "correlated to any political solution". The Government is expressing a sense of saturation and the need to prepare the gradual return of refugees, in coordination with the international community and with respect for international law, including the principle of non-refoulement. Frequent surveys conducted by UNHCR in Lebanon reflect that Syrian refugees in Lebanon overwhelmingly wish to return once it is safe for them to do so.

68. According to World Bank projections, the medium-term economic prospects for Lebanon remain stagnant owing to the ongoing impact of the Syrian conflict, coupled with limited progress on reforms. The Government has highlighted the capital investment plan as a vehicle for the creation of jobs, thus addressing a main driver of tensions in the country. Announced as part of the Government's vision at the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, held in

April 2017, the plan identifies projects relating to infrastructure and service improvement worth $13 billion, which it seeks to fund through public-private partnerships, concessional loans and bilateral assistance. Donors have called for the plan to be complemented by structural reforms.

69. An estimated 65 per cent of Palestine refugees registered and living in Lebanon and 90 per cent of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic live below the poverty line. All are heavily dependent on UNRWA assistance, given significant restrictions on their employment and property rights and their access to public services in Lebanon. Findings of an official census of Palestine refugees in Lebanon are expected to be released by December. On 20 July, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee launched a strategy paper entitled "A unified Lebanese vision for the Palestinian refugees affairs in Lebanon".

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

70. UNIFIL continually reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures, taking into account security threat warnings, and closely coordinated with the Lebanese authorities. In the Arqub area (Sector East), strict security measures, including the use of armed escorts, remained in place for movements by United Nations personnel. Meanwhile, commemorative and celebratory shooting continue to pose a threat, both to the local population and to UNIFIL personnel. Furthermore, owing to armed clashes between 17 and 23 August in the Ein El Helweh camp for Palestine refugees in Sidon, situated along the main supply route connecting the UNIFIL area of operations with Beirut, UNIFIL had to adjust its movements and utilize alternative routes.

71. UNIFIL continued to monitor proceedings in the Lebanese military courts against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL. With regard to the attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent in 2007, a hearing at the Permanent Military Court was rescheduled from 5 July to 27 November. In the case of terror intent, opened in January 2014, the Court held a hearing on 5 July; the next hearing is scheduled for 27 November. In the case of an attempted serious attack against UNIFIL in 2008, in which one of the four sentenced perpetrators filed an appeal, hearings scheduled for 9 May and 2 November 2017 before the Military Court of Appeal were adjourned; a new hearing is scheduled for 6 February 2018. In three investigations launched into the serious attacks perpetrated against UNIFIL on 27 May, 26 July and 9 December 2011, additional judicial instructions were issued. In the case of a homicide committed in 1980, when three UNIFIL peacekeepers from Ireland were shot dead, a hearing at the Permanent Military Court was held on 26 July; the next hearing is scheduled for 2 February 2018.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

72. As at 30 October, UNIFIL comprised 10,693 military personnel, including 457 women, or 4 per cent of the Force, from 41 troop-contributing countries; 246 international staff, including 82 women; and 585 national civilian staff, including 150 women. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force comprised five corvettes, one fast patrol boat, one offshore patrol vessel, two helicopters and 756 of the Force's total military personnel, including 2 women. In addition, 51 military observers from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, including 5 women, serve with Observer Group Lebanon, under the operational control of UNIFIL.

V. Conduct and discipline

73. UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon did not receive any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse during the period under review. Both continued to enforce existing measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. In accordance with the UNIFIL internal and external communications strategy, all UNIFIL personnel and the local communities were informed of the expected standards of conduct for United Nations personnel and of how to report misconduct, in particular in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations country team network to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in Lebanon continued to further develop information-sharing protocols and share best practices.

VI. Observations

74. I remain concerned about the lack of full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the unfulfilled obligations of Lebanon and Israel. Non-compliance increases the risk of tensions and possibly of hostilities. I call upon both parties to redouble efforts towards full adherence to resolution 1701 (2006) to bolster stability and prevent conflict. The continued commitment of Lebanon and Israel to resolution 1701 (2006) in word and in deed is of paramount importance.

75. The presence of unauthorized weapons in the hands of Hizbullah remains of serious concern. Hizbullah operations in the eastern border areas illustrate the extent of weaponry outside the authority of the State, and I note with concern the self-acknowledged use and display of that weaponry by Hizbullah. The presence of those weapons, together with threatening rhetoric from both sides, heightens risks of miscalculation and escalation into conflict. I call upon the parties to exercise restraint at all times.

76. UNIFIL continues to fulfil its mandate to assist the Lebanese authorities in establishing an area between the Litani River and the Blue Line free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL. I welcome the immediate and proactive steps that UNIFIL has taken to operationalize resolution 2373 (2017), including by maintaining a high operational tempo and adapting its posture and modus operandi to enhance the visibility and effectiveness of its operations. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat and UNIFIL have also undertaken steps to ensure that the Security Council is provided with prompt, concrete and detailed reporting on violations of resolution 1701 (2006). The Secretariat will maintain close contact with the parties, Council members and troop-contributing countries in the implementation of resolution 2373 (2017).

77. As stipulated in resolution 1701 (2006), I call upon the Government of Lebanon to take all actions necessary to ensure the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon so that, pursuant to the Lebanese Cabinet decision of 27 July 2006, there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. I reiterate my request to the Lebanese authorities for the resumption of the national dialogue, with the objective of formulating a national defence strategy that would address the presence of armed individuals and groups outside of State control. The Lebanese Armed Forces are the sole legitimate defender of the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Earlier decisions of the national dialogue should be implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups

and the dismantling of the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

78. I am equally concerned about continued Israeli overflights of Lebanese territory. The Israel Defense Forces continue to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. These are clear violations of resolution 1701 (2006). I reiterate my condemnation of all violations of Lebanese sovereignty and reiterate my call for Israel to cease its violations of Lebanese airspace and to withdraw its forces from northern Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line.

79. UNIFIL liaison and coordination arrangements are key to mitigating and de-escalating incidents, violations and tensions along the Blue Line. The calm along the Blue Line should not be taken for granted, especially against a backdrop of regional uncertainty. I call upon both parties to continue their active engagement with UNIFIL, to manage sensitive situations and to maintain stability and security for the communities living on either side of the Blue Line. The open and constructive exchanges in the tripartite forum, including on long-standing violations of resolution 1701 (2006), are testament to the commitment of the parties, as well as to their confidence in UNIFIL and the liaison and coordination arrangements.

80. Reinforcing the national institutions and army of Lebanon remains the best preventive measure against the risk of conflict. The Lebanese Armed Forces have proven to be a credible security actor. I commend their achievements and enduring commitment to the service of the security and stability of Lebanon. I pay tribute to the military personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight against terrorism, and their families.

81. I am encouraged by the consolidation of the Lebanese Armed Forces deployment along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic and the Government's decision to deploy additional troops in the area south of the Litani River in the implementation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2373 (2017).

82. The deployment of the Fifth Intervention Regiment to southern Lebanon will enable more coordinated activities between the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL and will help to expand the authority of the State throughout Lebanese territory. I look forward to tangible progress in the establishment of the model regiment and an increase in the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon, as specified during the strategic review of UNIFIL. Investing in the Lebanese Armed Forces is investing in the stability of Lebanon.

83. The United Nations, including through the International Support Group for Lebanon, will continue advocating for international support for the Lebanese army and security institutions. The United Nations will, in connection, continue encouraging the Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to advance additional deployments south of the Litani River and update the capabilities development plan, while adhering to the principles of accountability, independence and international human rights.

84. I condemn the movement of fighters and war materiel across the Lebanese-Syrian border in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the shelling and shooting into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic. The lack of a delineated, demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border does not justify violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon all concerned to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

85. The stability of Lebanon remains a regional public good that must be shielded. The turmoil in the region continues to pose grave risks in this regard. Despite the efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces to secure the border with the Syrian Arab

Republic, Lebanese nationals continue to participate in the Syrian conflict. The participation of any Lebanese national in the Syrian conflict constitutes a breach of the policy of disassociation, pursuant to the Baabda Declaration agreed by all Lebanese political parties. I reiterate my call upon all Lebanese parties to cease their involvement in the Syrian conflict.

86. The uncertain regional environment underscores the importance of the parties actively pursuing progress towards a permanent ceasefire. The United Nations remains ready to support efforts in this regard, and I encourage the parties to explore confidence-building measures with the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander.

87. I again encourage both parties to proceed with steps that would allow for the resolution of the dispute over the exclusive economic zone. I re-emphasize that the United Nations remains available to assist with the delineation of the exclusive economic zone between Lebanon and Israel, if both parties so request. I continue to urge the parties to adopt a constructive approach that would pave the way to the mutually beneficial exploitation of maritime oil and gas resources, which can serve as a much-needed confidence-building measure.

88. Progress towards the genuine reactivation of all Lebanese State institutions must be safeguarded. In the context of uncertainty following the offer of resignation by the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, I count on all sides to focus their efforts on supporting the continuity of Lebanese State institutions in accordance with the Constitution and safeguarding the country's security and stability. In this regard, I appeal to all political stakeholders to sustain the positive momentum in preparations for the parliamentary elections. The new electoral law, agreed by the country's political parties in a spirit of compromise and in the national interest, is a notable achievement. Adherence to timely parliamentary elections is a matter of political stability, democratic tradition, and accountability to the citizens of Lebanon. I trust that any technical electoral matters will be addressed in a way that does not jeopardize adherence to the electoral date in May 2018. United Nations technical assistance to the electoral process remains available.

89. The meaningful participation of women in the electoral process is imperative. In the absence of mandated gender quotas in the electoral law, this hinges on the commitment of political parties to voluntary gender quotas and incentives. The support expressed in this regard by several political leaders is reassuring. I urge relevant decision makers to ensure the adequate representation of women in the upcoming elections, in line with commitments of Lebanon to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

90. I hope that the steps necessary to ensure the national human rights institution of Lebanon is fully staffed and functioning can soon be taken. While I welcome the newly adopted legislation on both torture and women's rights, I encourage more work to address outstanding legal gaps.

91. There is a risk that violent tensions will recur in Ein El Helweh so long as the underlying drivers of socioeconomic hardship, extremism and weapons proliferation are not addressed. I encourage efforts, including through greater donor support, to preserve stability in the camps and their environs and to ensure dignified conditions for Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

92. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resulting refugee presence remains an important challenge for Lebanon. I extend my appreciation to Lebanon and its Government for their hospitality and generosity in shouldering this presence. I am concerned about an increase in rhetoric that could incite a climate of hostility

and violence against refugees. I call upon the people and leadership of Lebanon to preserve their spirit of tolerance and coexistence that is characteristic of Lebanon.

93. The protection and dignity of refugees in Lebanon must be ensured until they can find durable solutions outside of Lebanon. Continued international assistance to refugees and host communities will be key in this regard. It is important to increase support to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and the predictability of its funding for 2018 and beyond and to mobilize longer-term development resources, especially in a context of social tensions and growing host community fatigue.

94. Returns organized between armed groups for fighters and accompanying civilians did not involve the United Nations and do not set the standard for future refugee returns. While some improvements in the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic are noted, the situation remains unpredictable, with 1 million newly internally displaced in 2017. The resumption of registration by UNHCR would be important to appropriately prepare for voluntary, safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration.

95. I encourage discussions on international conferences in support of the stability of Lebanon, to provide the opportunity for the Government to share concrete details of its vision for the country's economic growth and sustainable development, and to secure further support from the international community.

96. I welcome the continued progress by the Government of Lebanon in the development of a national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism. I encourage more sustained efforts for its finalization in close collaboration with the United Nations and national and international partners.

97. The prevention of conflict, instability and socioeconomic crisis remains the imperative underpinning all United Nations efforts in Lebanon. The Special Coordinator will continue to exercise good offices on my behalf, with the dual goals of defusing tensions and identifying opportunities for confidence-building measures and progress towards stability. The parties carry a central responsibility in this regard. I call upon them to intensify efforts in pursuit of prevention and stability and to avail themselves of United Nations support in this regard.

98. I extend my appreciation to all countries contributing troops and equipment to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon. I thank the former Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Sigrid Kaag, upon the completion of her assignment, for her leadership and dedication in carrying out the important work of the United Nations in Lebanon. I commend the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Michael Beary, and the civilian and military personnel of UNIFIL, as well as the staff of the Office of the Special Coordinator, for their continued efforts.

Annex I

Unauthorized weapons in the area of operations not involving hunting weapons observed by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon from 22 June to 6 November 2017

1. On 23 July, a UNIFIL patrol observed a group of civilians near Majdal Silm (Sector West), one of whom was carrying a pistol.

2. On 9 August, UNIFIL reported two civilians near Qulay'ah (Sector East) traveling in a vehicle with an assault rifle.

3. On 13 August, UNIFIL reported a civilian in a vehicle travelling near Burj Qallawiyah (Sector East) with an assault rifle.

4. On 13 August, live television broadcasts showed the display of unauthorized weapons during a commemoration of the 2006 conflict in Khiyam (Sector East), including several assault rifles and a launcher. UNIFIL formally protested the incident to Lebanese Armed Forces.

5. On 19 August, UNIFIL observed an individual travelling near Sarda (Sector East) with a pistol in the vehicle.

6. On 29 August, UNIFIL observed a convoy of approximately 60 vehicles near Haris (Sector West). One civilian fired in the air using an assault rifle.

7. On 1 September, UNIFIL observed two individuals near Shama' (Sector West) firing an unidentified weapon.

8. On 2 September, UNIFIL observed two individuals carrying an unidentified automatic weapon and a short rifle in a vehicle near Ain al-Arab (Sector East).

9. On 1 October, UNIFIL observed an individual carrying an automatic assault rifle near Dibbin (Sector East).

10. On 9 October, UNIFIL observed two individuals carrying an automatic assault rifle in a civilian vehicle near Arab al-Wazzani (Sector East).

11. On 16 October, UNIFIL observed an individual with a handgun in the vicinity of Blida (Sector East). The municipal police confirmed the same day that the individual had been detained in connection with a robbery.

Annex II

Restrictions on the freedom of movement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon from 22 June to 6 November 2017

1. On 6 July, civilians confronted a UNIFIL patrol dispatched to investigate activities by civilians observed near Yarun (Sector West). A Lebanese Armed Forces patrol intervened after the civilians took the UNIFIL patrol's camera. The Lebanese Armed Forces investigated the incident and retrieved the camera the following day. Village patrols resumed on a weekly basis without incident.

2. On 17 July, after taking photographs of a UNIFIL patrol, civilians attempted to forcibly enter a stationary Mission vehicle near Udaysah (Sector East). Following the incident, operational activities resumed without interruption and UNIFIL enhanced its civil-military cooperation and outreach activities with the local communities and authorities.

3. On 24 July, in the vicinity of Khiyam (Sector East), civilians seized a camera from a UNIFIL civilian staff member who had accompanied a foot patrol. The Lebanese Armed Forces was informed about the incident, and the equipment was returned. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces met with local leaders after the incident and weekly joint village patrols resumed on 31 August, without further incident.

4. On 3 August, a motorcycle and a truck blocked a UNIFIL vehicle patrol near Blida (Sector East). Civilians reacted aggressively towards the patrol, taking some electronic equipment from UNIFIL personnel. Upon arrival at the location, the Lebanese Armed Forces restored calm. Since then, the equipment has been returned and UNIFIL activities have continued without incident, with UNIFIL enhancing its civil-military and outreach activities in the area.

5. On 5 August, civilian vehicles attempted to block a UNIFIL patrol near Kfar Kila (Sector East). A UNIFIL quick reaction team escorted the patrol back to its position. Foot patrols in the village have continued without incident. UNIFIL continues to liaise with local authorities on a range of issues, including on projects to assist a local medical facility.

6. On 19 August, around 100 civilians near Ayta al-Sha'b (Sector West) surrounded a UNIFIL convoy, taking several items of equipment. The convoy left the area after the Lebanese Armed Forces intervened. Following the incident, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces met with the local authorities to de-escalate tensions. Most of the equipment taken was recovered. A few days later, a UNIFIL foot patrol was received positively by the community, and joint Lebanese Armed Forces-UNIFIL patrols have been conducted since without incident.

7. On 12 September, a group of individuals stopped a UNIFIL patrol dispatched to Sribbin (Sector West) to investigate possible gunshots. After negotiating with the group, UNIFIL departed the area. The Lebanese Armed Forces were informed. It was also clarified that the sounds were fireworks used during a community celebration. UNIFIL continues to follow up with local authorities to discuss steps to avoid similar incidents.

8. On 23 September, near Jumayjmah (Sector West), a group of individuals demanded that UNIFIL troops leave the village after a resident had invited them into his home. Before the UNIFIL troops departed, the group took cameras from them. The Lebanese Armed Forces arrived a few minutes later to escort the patrol out of the village. The seized equipment was returned the next day. UNIFIL has resumed regular operational activities in the village without incident.

9. On 19 October, two individuals in a vehicle approached an Observer Group Lebanon patrol as it was reversing back to the main road in the vicinity of Ayta al-Sha'b (Sector West). The Observer Group Lebanon team opened the door of their armoured vehicle to speak to the individuals, who briefly questioned them before taking telecommunications equipment from the interior of the vehicle. After the team had explained their activities, the equipment was returned and the patrol continued along the planned route. The Lebanese Armed Forces were informed. Observer Group Lebanon and UNIFIL have continued patrols in Ayta al-Sha'b on a routine basis in subsequent weeks without any incident.

Annex III

Update on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2017 strategic review of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

1. Further to the letter dated 8 March 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/202) communicating the strategic priorities and key recommendations of the strategic review of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the present overview provides an update on progress in the implementation of those recommendations.

Protection of civilians

2. UNIFIL intensified its liaison with interlocutors from the Government of Lebanon on the protection of civilians and continues close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon. UNIFIL and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat have also agreed on guidelines for coordination between the Mission and the humanitarian country team.

3. UNIFIL reviewed its contingency plans, assessed the preparedness of civilian and military personnel in response to protection of civilians crisis situations in a series of "command post" and "table-top" exercises in June and November 2017, systematically briefed contingent commanders on protection of civilians requirements and ensured that contingents had no national restrictions on carrying out the protection of civilians mandate. As part of ensuring the overall Mission preparedness, UNIFIL designed and began rolling out one-day training modules on the implementation of the protection of civilians mandate for all personnel at headquarters and in sectors. The Mission support logistics plan was finalized and all relevant documents were updated.

Strategic dialogue mechanism

4. UNIFIL engagement with the Lebanese Armed Forces on all core aspects of Lebanese Armed Forces capacity-building continued. The UNIFIL Deputy Force Commander and the Deputy Head of Mission engaged jointly with the Lebanese Armed Forces on a range of coordination and capacity-building issues.

5. A concept of operations for the model regiment, including an initial set of benchmarks and timelines to measure progress, is under preparation.

6. Using its Coastal Radar Organization stations, the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy assumes the command of maritime interdiction operations in Lebanese territorial waters, including through a continuous presence at sea for a period of 72 hours each week. In addition, since early 2017, the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy regularly deploys one vessel during a 24-hour period each week in close coordination with the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force in proximity to Lebanese ports to conduct maritime interdiction operations. The presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy at sea is constrained owing to the unavailability of additional suitable vessels.

7. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force onshore and offshore training led to the establishment of a Lebanese Armed Forces Navy pool of instructors who, in turn, provide training to Lebanese Armed Forces Navy units on six core courses. Engineering courses aimed at enhancing maintenance capabilities will be added to the core curriculum in the next phase.

8. It was confirmed that the location of the Lebanese Armed Forces civil-military cooperation centre in the south would be in Marj'yun (Sector East), and technical work for the establishment of the centre is ongoing. UNIFIL facilitated the securing of funding from a troop-contributing country, complemented by quick-impact project funding for the refurbishment of the premises.

9. Discussions are under way, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, to hold a meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon dedicated to enhancing the capability of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The acquisition of an offshore patrol vessel by the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy remains a critical priority for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy to gradually assume control of Lebanese territorial waters.

Liaison and coordination with the parties

10. The updating of all UNIFIL internal guidance is ongoing to ensure the optimal synchronization of actions by the Mission's assets in a crisis or in case of an incident in the area of operations.

11. As of August 2017, UNIFIL had strengthened its Liaison Branch, deploying a second Liaison Team permanently south of the Blue Line. UNIFIL continues advocating with Israeli authorities for the necessity of establishing a Liaison Office in Tel Aviv.

Structure of the uniformed and civilian components of the Force

Land forces

12. In the context of the deployment of the Fifth Intervention Regiment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to the UNIFIL area of operations in late September 2017, the UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission and the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces agreed to establish a coordination committee to enhance joint activities, follow up on incidents in the area of operations and address other operational matters between the two forces.

13. A review of all memorandums of understanding for UNIFIL contingent-owned equipment identified efficiencies amounting to $5 million. Work is ongoing between UNIFIL and United Nations Headquarters to ensure that all memorandums of understanding are adjusted to effect the projected savings.

14. On the basis of the 2017 military capability study, UNFIL is conducting troop-to-task reviews in an effort to ensure that UNIFIL fulfils its mandated tasks optimally.

Maritime task force

15. Preparations are ongoing to reconfigure the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force into a six-vessel all-corvette fleet as of January 2018. Helicopter flight hours were reduced to 25 hours per month within the current budget cycle. The reduction of maritime personnel is expected to come into effect with the reconfiguration of the Maritime Task Force in January 2018.

Community outreach activities

16. UNIFIL made progress on all recommendations pertaining to community outreach activities. The community outreach board was established and held its first meetings, chaired by the Deputy Head of Mission, to address the Mission's outreach priorities at the strategic level. Terms of reference for the outreach board and the subcommittees on strategic communications and programmatic activities/projects were

finalized. Both subcommittees have taken up their regular work, supported by a secretariat. The concept of the local perception survey is undergoing review.

17. Work is ongoing to ensure that community outreach activities are planned and implemented Mission-wide in a coordinated and synchronized manner. To that end, the coordination mechanism between the Mission's civil-military cooperation branch (J9 branch) and the Force Commander's Civil-Military Cooperation Unit has been enhanced, and the Chief of the J9 branch briefs the military Chief of Staff daily.

18. The identification of suitable UNIFIL quick-impact projects, within the planning framework for the 2018–2019 budget cycle, is progressing. The aim of the process is also to ensure, to the extent possible, an equitable distribution of funds between the communities in the UNIFIL area of operations.

19. In June, UNIFIL established the Mission Strategic Communications Unit/Public Information Office to strengthen the coherence and delivery of UNIFIL strategic communications, headed by a Senior Officer (P-5), who reports to the Deputy Head of Mission. The Military Community Outreach Unit was reduced in strength from 55 to 25 personnel and merged into the Mission Strategic Communications Unit/ Public Information Office.

Budget and staffing

20. To further optimize its staffing, UNIFIL identified three posts (two National Professional Officer posts in the Civil Affairs Section and one P-2 post in the HIV/AIDS Unit) to be abolished.

Mission integration and coordination

21. UNIFIL established, within existing resources, a position of Mission Chief of Staff in the Office of the Head of Mission and Force Commander at the D-1 level. The temporary arrangement will be regularized in the 2018/19 budget.